

G E O R G K A R G L B O X

Press Release

NEDKO SOLAKOV Two Site-Specific Pieces with More Options

Exhibition dates: May 12–June 18, 2011

With the exhibition entitled *Two Site-Specific Pieces with More Options*, for the first time Georg Kargl BOX presents a solo show by one of the most well-known Bulgarian contemporary artists: Nedko Solakov (born in 1957). He studied mural painting at the art academy in Sofia and then later complemented this classical art training with conceptual elements and a sense for the absurd in his installations, images, and performances, which engage with the history of art and the viewer's expectations.

A first look at the exhibition shows an ensemble of works whose presentation is reminiscent of a theater staging. On the main wall, there is a heavy red curtain hanging from the ceiling. But the curtain cannot be opened and apparently doesn't actually conceal anything. It only covers a wooden box that is placed in the corner, as if incidentally, half open. Within it, there is an icon-like object typical of the artist, whose details remain hidden to the beholder. The installation seems mysterious and puzzling. A handwritten text on the wall then reveals something more about the works produced especially for this exhibition.

Nedko Solakov is a storyteller par excellence. He tells stories with humor and irony. This is evident in his cycle of drawings in ink on smaller format paper, which the artist shows precisely where they are not expected. The drawings, which he unerringly entitles *Behind the Corner Stories*, are about apparently everyday occurrences that are given an absurd twist. There's a "man with no ambition sneaking behind the corner to find one (and possibly to catch it)." Or the rulers "in/of my country" are hated, and simply wished "behind the corner," "going to hell."

In his narratives, Solakov deals with universal subjects as well as autobiographical elements. Here, the collapse of the communist system at the end of the 1980s proved to be a crucial moment in shaping his work. In his art, Solakov repeatedly returns to his life under a socialist dictatorship, as well as the experience of the change in systems and the only apparently acquired freedom of choice. His works show that by no means were all dreams fulfilled that after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the arrival of democracy of a Western bent.

Since presenting *Top Secret*—which was also on view in 2007 at Documenta 12—for the first time in 1990, Nedko Solakov has enjoyed an international reputation in the world of contemporary art. As the work was described in a catalog from 2008, "Top Secret (created between December 1989 and February 1990) consists of an index box, filled with a series of cards detailing the artist's youthful collaboration with the Bulgarian secret police, which he stopped in 1983. In Bulgaria, twenty-two years after the changeover, the official files remain closed, and there are no publicly known documents on the artist's collaboration. The work caused great controversy when it was first exhibited in the spring of 1990, at the height of the political changes to the long-standing Communist rule. The self-disclosing gesture in this artistic project is still unique in the context of post-Communist Europe, and since its appearance Top Secret has become an icon of its time."¹

¹ *Nedko Solakov: Emotions* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), p. 200

The charm of Nedko Solakov's work inheres in the interaction between seriousness and humor, simplicity and complexity. The artist himself only groups his works into two large categories: "simple works" and "complicated works."² Yet the "simple works" are anything but "simple" and their enigmatic humor is only visible on second glance.

Text: Karin Dornbach

Translation: Brian Currid, zweisprachkunst.de

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Nedko Solakov (born 1957, Tchernven Briag, Bulgaria; lives in Sofia) has exhibited extensively in Europe and the United States. His work was featured in Aperto'93 (Venice Biennial); the 48th, 49th, 50th and 52nd Venice Biennial; the 3rd, 4th and 9th Istanbul Biennial; São Paulo'94; Manifesta 1, Rotterdam; the 2nd and 4th Gwangju Biennial; the 5th Lyon Biennial, Sonsbeek 9, Arnhem, the 4th and 5th Cetinje Biennial, the 1st Lodz Biennial; the 7th Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates; the 3rd Tirana Biennial; the 2nd Seville Biennial; the 2nd Moscow Biennial; documenta 12; 16th Sydney Biennial, and Prospect 1, New Orleans Biennial. Recently he had solo shows at Museu do Chiado, Lisbon; Stichting De Appel, Amsterdam; CCA Kitakyushu, Japan; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Centre d'Art Santa Monica, Barcelona; Kunsthaus Zurich; Castello di Rivoli, Rivoli; Sofia City Art Gallery and Galleria Borghese, Rome. In 2003-2005 an extensive mid-career "A 12 1/3 (and even more) Year Survey" was presented at Casino Luxembourg, Rooseum Malmoe and O.K Centrum Linz, and in 2008-2009 the "Emotions" solo project was exhibited at Kunstmuseum Bonn, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, and Institut Mathildenhoehe, Darmstadt. Among his forthcoming projects are solo exhibitions at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; Fondazione Galleria Civica Trento; S.M.A.K., Ghent and Fundação de Serralves, Porto.

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Tue, Wed, Fri 11 am – 7 pm
Thu 11 am – 8 pm
Sat 11 am – 4 pm

² See Nedko Solakov's homepage www.nedkosolakov.net

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